

## ***POLICY FOR INCLUSION OF SPECIAL POPULATIONS IN DISTRICT OR STATEWIDE ACHIEVEMENT TESTING***

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities are to be included in all district and statewide assessment programs. Accommodations must be provided when necessary.

Students who meet the state-developed alternate assessment eligibility guidelines for significant cognitive impairments may participate in the Idaho Alternate Assessment instead of part or all of the regular district or statewide testing. Participation rates and performance data, both aggregate and disaggregate, for all students are reported to the public annually.

The IEP team will determine how the student with disabilities will participate in the district and statewide assessment programs. Options include regular assessments with accommodations, without accommodations or in the alternate assessment. A five step process for IEP teams to use in the selection, administration, and evaluation of the use of classroom and assessment accommodations is provided to guide IEP teams, 504 plan committees, general and special education teachers, administrators, and district level assessment staff. More information about the five steps is in the Idaho's Accommodation Manual for Special Education. The five steps include the following:

1. Expect students with disabilities to achieve grade-level academic content standards.
2. Learn about accommodations for instruction and assessment.
3. Select accommodations for instruction and assessment for individual students.
4. Administer accommodations during instruction and assessment.
5. Evaluate and improve accommodation use.

### **WHAT ARE ACCOMMODATIONS?**

**Accommodations are practices and procedures that provide equitable access during instruction and assessments for students with special needs.**

**Typically, accommodation use does not begin and end in school. Students who use accommodations will generally also need them at home and in the community. Some students will continue to need accommodations as they get older, in postsecondary education and at work. Accommodations for instruction and assessment are very closely connected.**

**Accommodations are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student's disability or limitation; however, they do not reduce learning expectations. The accommodations provided to a student should be the same for classroom instruction, classroom assessments, and district and state assessments. Certain accommodations may be needed more often at some grades than others depending on academic content and rigor. It is critical to note**

that although some accommodations may be appropriate for instruction use, they may not be appropriate for use on a standardized assessment. For example, a student may routinely listen to text read aloud as apart of instruction, but an oral administration of a reading test changes the construct of what is being measured. In other words, reading aloud a standardized reading test is no longer testing reading comprehension, but rather listening comprehension. There may be consequences (e.g., invalidating a student's test score) that results from the use of some accommodations during state assessments. It is very important that educators become familiar with state policies as outline in this manual regarding the use of accommodations.

## **DESCRIPTION OF ACCOMMODATIONS CATEGORIES**

The accommodations in this manual are categorized in four ways: presentation, response, setting / timing and scheduling

- **Presentation Accommodations** allow students to access information in alternate formats to regular online test. Accommodated forms are Braille, Large Print, Paper-and-Pencil and Audio.
- **Response Accommodations** allow students to complete activities, assignments, and assessments using methods other than paper-and-pencil or machine-scorable responses. Accommodations may include allowing student answers to be entered on the computer or answer document by a test proctor.
- **Setting Accommodations** change the location in which a test or assignment is given or the conditions of the assessment setting.
- **Timing / Scheduling Accommodations** increase the standard length of time to complete an assignment or assessment or possibly change the way the time is organized. Extended time is allowed if the IEP requires it.

The following guidelines will be used to determine how the student will participate in statewide and district-wide assessments:

1. **Regular Assessment without Accommodations.**

The IEP team determines and documents in the IEP that a student with a disability can adequately demonstrate his or her knowledge, abilities, or skills on statewide and district assessments without accommodations.

2. **Regular Assessment with Accommodations that do not invalidate the test results.**

Accommodations must be the same or nearly the same as those used by the student in completing classroom assignments and assessment activities. The accommodations must be necessary for enabling the student to demonstrate knowledge, ability, skill, or mastery. Accommodations *do not* invalidate test results. Allowable accommodations for testing are listed below. Any accommodation beyond what is listed below will be considered an adaptation which will invalidate the test results.

Students with disabilities who are eligible for a 504 accommodation-plan may also participate in the district or statewide assessment program if the accommodations are listed on the plan and are used for instruction and classroom testing.

### 3. Alternate Assessment

The IEP team must find that the student meets all of the criteria listed below to determine if the student is eligible to participate in the alternate assessment and not the regular district or statewide assessments:

- a. The student's demonstrated cognitive ability and adaptive behavior prevent completion of the general academic curriculum even with program modifications;
- b. The student's course of study is primarily functional-skill and living-skill oriented (typically not measured by state or district assessments); and
- c. The student is unable to acquire, maintain, or generalize skills (in multiple settings) and demonstrate performance of those skills without intensive frequent individualized instruction.

Students are not to be included in the alternate assessment for any of the following reasons:

- a. The only determining factor is that the student has an IEP;
- b. The student is academically behind because of excessive absences or lack of instruction; or
- c. The student is unable to complete the general academic curriculum because of socioeconomic or cultural differences.

If the IEP team determines that the student meets the criteria for participation in the alternate assessment and he/she is working on content standards within the general education curriculum, the student may participate in relevant portions of the regular assessments and participate in appropriate areas in the alternate assessment.

#### 4. Regular Assessments with Adaptations

A student may be unable to demonstrate what he or she knows without an adaptation. However, an adaptation inherently changes the underlying skills that the test is measuring; therefore, an adaptation **always** invalidates the assessment result.

The IEP team has the authority to make the decision that a student needs an adaptation in order to participate in statewide and district wide assessments under IDEA, even though the adaptation will cause the student to score as “**no score reported**” and to be counted as **NOT participating** in the assessment under AYP determinations. All IEP team members, including the parent and/or adult student, shall understand (a) the possible consequences that could result from this decision and (b) its effect on diploma options and post school activities involving education, career opportunities, military service, and community participation.

## ***DISTRICT / STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS GUIDELINES***

Accommodations for district and statewide assessments shall only be considered allowable, valid, and scorable if they are used during instruction and/or classroom testing and are listed on the student's IEP or 504-accommodation plan. However, it is important to remember that not all classroom accommodations are appropriate for assessments.

Accommodations are commonly categorized in four ways: (1) presentation and administration, (2) response, (3) setting, and (4) timing and scheduling. The following lists are state approved accommodations from these categories that will not invalidate statewide assessments.

Several Idaho statewide assessments are now being given in paper-pencil or computer-adapted formats. Accommodations for these formats may differ. Students who have not had access to computer-based instruction and/or assessment should be given opportunities prior to the statewide assessments to use tutorials or take practice tests.

More detailed accommodation lists for each statewide assessment is listed in the Idaho Accommodation Manual for Special Education. This list is not exhaustive and there may be other accommodations that are appropriate for a particular student. For special approvals of other accommodations not listed or for clarification, e-mail the testing coordinator at the Idaho State Board of Education or the Special Education section at the Idaho Department of Education.

### **PAPER-PENCIL and COMPUTER ACCOMMODATIONS**

#### **1. Flexible Presentation and administration**

Flexible presentation and administration includes changes in how an assessment is given to a student. Students are allowed to access information in ways that do not require them to visually read standard print. The modes of access can be auditory, tactile, visual, and multi-sensory. The main types of presentation accommodations are (a) format alterations; (b) procedure changes; and (c) use of assistive devices. Specific types of flexible presentations include:

- Computer screen and/or screen overlays
- Large print
- Braille and/or Nemeth Braille code
- Magnification device
- Tactile graphics
- Screen reader
- Coding the student in the SEF File will activate an audio accommodation for students whose IEPs allow for science, math and language usage tests to be read aloud to the student.

- Reading the reading test will invalidate the test.
- Human readers will be allowed for math science and language usage for paper and pencil, large print and Braille accommodated versions.
- Rereading the test directions;
- Answering questions about the test administration directions;
- Using an interpreter to sign directions or questions;
- Audio amplification devices
- Explaining the test administration directions to the student any time during the test;
- Locating the answer bubbles directly along side of the choices in multiple-choice exams;
- Using cues on the answer form (e.g., arrows, stop signs);
- Simplifying the language to clarify or explain the directions;
- Prompting the student to stay focused on the test, move ahead, or read entire item.

## 2. Flexible Responses

Students are allowed to complete assessments in different ways or to solve or organize problems using some type of assistive device or organizer. The primary reason for providing flexible response accommodations is to meet needs related to physical and sensory disabilities that limit the student's ability to respond. However, processing difficulties that limit the ability to get a response may also be a reason for requesting accommodations; such accommodations may include, for example, using a calculator when the target skill is math problem solving (not calculation) or using a spell checker when the target skill is written composition (excluding mechanics).

The main types of flexible responses are (a) format alterations; (b) procedure changes; and (c) use of assistive devices. Examples of flexible responses include:

- Student dictates or signs responses to a scribe;
- Student points or using other assistive communication device to response to a scribe.
- Marking in the test booklet rather than on an answer sheet with bubbles;
- Type on or speak to a word processor
- Use spelling and grammar assistive device (Not when assessing writing mechanics)
- Calculation device (e.g. talking calculator with enlarged keys, but not when measuring calculation)
- Manipulatives or Abacus for calculation
- Student repeats and explains directions to check for understanding
- Student talks aloud when answering items, e.g. reads items and answers aloud in a separate setting)

- Use graph paper to keep numbers in proper columns
- Wider lines or margins;

### 3. Flexible Setting

Setting Accommodations change the location in which a test is given or the conditions of the assessment setting. Flexible settings are most commonly used when a student (a) has difficulty focusing attention when in a group setting; (b) disturbs others in a group setting; (c) needs frequent breaks; or (d) needs flexible timing. Flexible settings may include:

- Preferential seating in the room (front, near exit, etc; )
- Location to reduce distractions such as study carrel;
- Small group administration in a separate setting;
- Individual administration in a separate location;
- Quiet location with minimal distractions; or
- Location to provide assertive technology devices or special equipment.

### 4. Flexible Timing and/or Scheduling Accommodations

Flexible timing and/or scheduling increase the allowable length of time to complete an assessment and perhaps changes the way the time is organized.

Flexible timing and/or scheduling may include:

- Altering the time of day the test is administered (e.g., morning, midday, afternoon, after ingestion of medication);
- Administering the test in several sessions; administering the test over several days; or
- Administering the subtests in a different order (e.g., longer subtest first, shorter subtest later, math first, English later).
- Next day restart – extended time (Student must not have access to items)
- Multiple or frequent breaks
- Cues to begin working and stay on task

Flexible timing accommodations are appropriate in the following circumstances:

- a. Some accommodations create fatigue, such as the use of magnification equipment, tape recorders, and earphones. The use of these accommodations may require additional breaks, but not more total working time.
- b. Additional breaks may be needed because of very short attention spans, but not additional total time.

## **Assistive Technology**

An assistive technology device is any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a student with a disability. An AT device can range from something as simple as a pencil grip or paper tracking window to a complex computer system or augmentative communication device.

The use of AT as an accommodation must be: determined by the IEP team, listed on the IEP, and used in the student's regular instructional program.

Test administrators should be aware of possible malfunctions of AT devices during the administration of assessments that could significantly impact and invalidate the assessment results (e.g., dead batteries in a hearing aid or communication device, power outages). Test administrators must also ensure that proper materials are available (e.g., extension cords, tape recorder, special lighting) and that space is adequate for their use.

The following is a list of possible AT accommodations and some have been listed in the categories above. The list is not exhaustive, and other accommodations may be appropriate for a particular student.

- Study carrel;
- Adaptive or special furniture;
- Magnification or amplification devices;
- Audio taped administration (notify SDE in advance for DMA/DWA);
- Computer reads directions and/or items;
- Noise buffer;
- Templates to reduce visible print;
- Markers or masks to maintain place;
- Dark or raised lines;
- Pencil grips or large diameter pencil;
- Magnets or tape to secure papers to work area;
- White noise;
- Slant board or wedge;
- Communication device;
- Braille;
- Word processor or typewriter (spell checker not allowed if spelling is being tested);

## **ADAPTATIONS**

Adaptations invalidate the test results. If adaptations are used, the IEP team must discuss the purpose and need for the adaptation and any consequences that might result from using the adaptation (non-standard accommodation) that invalidate assessment results. According to federal requirements in calculating Adequate Yearly Progress for student performance, the Student will not be counted towards participation and is considered not proficient.



**Examples of adaptations:**

- Answering questions about **test items** any time during the test that provides the student an unfair advantage, even without giving the answers, e.g. explaining or giving examples of punctuation when the item asks a student to select the punctuation that might be needed
- Defining words for the student
- Using dictionaries that provide definitions
- Reading answer choices that actually give the student the correct response
- Extended time if there is a time limit in the test administration, e.g. extending one minute fluency probes